

were a dozen great men, all of whom were either earls by birth or destined shortly to become earls by creation; their mutual hostilities and friendships were an important factor in the history of these years. At the assembly of the Good Parliament the question which each of these men had to decide, was whether he would support the friends or the enemies of the House of Lancaster. Now it so happened that the Duke had temporarily alienated all the great nobles by the policy he had lately pursued of excluding them all from the councils of the King. Lord Latimer was by no means one of the higher peers, yet he was the highest in rank and power who had lately been permitted to share the profits of office and corruption. The complaint ran that 'nobles and prelates who come to the Court for necessary business' were not allowed an audience, but were * forced to remain outside in the courtyard among the poor,' and be 'catechised by people not really sent them by the King.'¹ It was for reasons such as these that the Earls of Warwick, Arundel and Stafford, and Henry Percy, afterwards Earl of Northumberland, joined the Commons against John of Gaunt. They were not opposed to him on any ground of principle, for he afterwards succeeded in securing their adhesion or neutrality by the coarsest bribes. But in April 1376 he stood alone on his defence, because he had sought to stand alone in his power. The Duke had besides mortal enemies whom no concession would have conciliated. The whole Courtenay family, the Earl of Devon and all his sons, of whom the chief was the Bishop of London, were special objects of his hatred. The Earl of March was another consistent and life-long enemy. The Prince of Wales was known to be dying, and his boy Eichard might die or might, it was darkly whispered, be set aside. It was considered possible that the Duke might play the part of King John to Richard's Prince Arthur.'² But supposing Eichard out of the way, the

*O. JS. B., 77.

¹ *Hot. Parl.*, ii. 330, sec. 50, and iii. 5, sees. 13-14. EDWA&D III.

Edward, Black Prince	Liionel of Clarence	John of Gaunt
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Richard EL Henry IV.	Philippa = Earl of March	